

Israeli Response To U.s. Proposed Defense Sales To Region

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Date: Canonical ID:

2006 March 13, 15:37 (Monday) 06TELAVIV1009_a

Original Classification:SECRET Current Classification:SECRET

1. (C) On March 2, Israeli MOD POL-MIL Bureau Senior Coordinator for Strategic Dialogues and Defense Cooperation Rami Yungman passed poloff the nonpaper in paragraph six — Israel's response to a U.S. presentation on proposed defense sales to the Middle East that was made at the January 11 U.S.-Israel Joint Political-Military Group (JPMG) meeting. Yungman said that the Israeli response fulfills one of the action items agreed by the U.S. and Israeli delegations at the JPMG.

2. (S) Yungman said that the Israeli non-paper (classified SECRET - RELEASABLE TO THE U.S.) can be broken into two parts. The first part lays out Israeli principles regarding defense sales to the region, and how Israel defines the Qualitative Military Edge. Yungman admitted there is very little new in this part in comparison to a similar non-paper the Israelis passed to the U.S. in November 2004. He also said that the first part reveals strong similarities among U.S. and Israeli views. The second part contains Israel's response to proposed U.S. defense sales to the region, item by item. Yungman stressed that Israel is grateful and appreciates that it can discuss with the U.S. America's proposed defense sales to the region. He said that if the USG has any questions about the Israeli non-paper, it should bring them forward.

3. (S) Yungman then reviewed Israel's view of the status of the remaining action items from the JPMG, based on a list of action items:

A. Israeli response to U.S. nonpaper — Done (see paragraph six).

B. Status report of export control system transformation — Israeli MOD DG Jacob Toren will visit the U.S. during the first week of April. Assuming the DPAG takes place during his visit, Toren will make a presentation on this topic. In the meantime, the transformation continues. The MOD is trying to work out the budgetary implications with the Israeli Treasury Ministry. The MFA and MOD are finishing work on draft legislation that will be presented to the Knesset once it reconvenes.

C. Closing the case on night vision goggles — Yungman said that the Israeli defense industry representative at the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C., Nir Ben Moshe, reported that on March 1, he had received a letter from DTSA Director DUSD McCormick characterizing the night vision goggle (NVG) issue as "closed" with respect to regular NVGs, and noting U.S. readiness to re-start NVG sales to Israel. McCormick reportedly wrote that additional clarification is needed from the Israeli side about thermal equipment. Nir Ben Moshe told Yungman that he has agreed to meet with State PM/DTC representatives to discuss next steps. Yungman said that Israel hopes that the thermal equipment issue will be resolved soon.

D. and E. Deepening discussion on Strategic Dialogue issues and the Iran threat — Yungman said that MOD POL-MIL Bureau Chief Amos Gilad would pursue this further during his visit to the U.S. the week of March 6, and that MOD DG Toren

would also raise this issue during his visit. Yungman suggested that the U.S. and Israel might form small teams of experts to go deeper on these issues.

E. (there was no "E" in original)

F. Deepening discussion on the Global War on Terrorism — Yungman said that Israel proposed to raise this at the DPAG.

G. MFO helos — Yungman said the MOD Budget Office is working on this issue right now. (NOTE: We know from an earlier discussion with Toren that MOD would prefer to provide support in the form of in-kind assistance, maintenance and services. END NOTE.)

H. Bodinger Channel — Yungman said that the four cases the channel is handling right now are being reviewed by the MOD's security directorate, MALMAB. MALMAB will soon release a detailed report to the Israeli MOD.

4. (S) Yungman also noted that the Israelis are traveling to other countries for their annual Strategic Dialogues. Within the next few months, Israeli delegations will visit France, Germany and the UK. Turkey will send a delegation to Israel in July. The MOD was represented in a delegation that traveled to India for Israel's Strategic Dialogue with India in December. The Indians will send a delegation to Israel in September to follow up. Yungman said Israel also has talks that are not quite at the SD level — but are similar — with Jordan and Egypt. He added that Israel DefMin Mofaz would soon travel to Germany and Romania.

5. (S) Yungman noted that the Israeli side hopes to receive answers to outstanding requests to the U.S. to review Israeli bids on security contracts for the Olympic games in China. Yungman said that 18 requests had been sent to the U.S. side over the last six months, and that Israel had received six replies to date. Yungman said that Israel hopes that the response process will be expedited, and noted that MOD DG Toren — as he promised to USD Edelman and Assistant Secretary Hillen — personally reviews the requests before they are forwarded to the U.S.

6 (S) Begin text of Israeli non-paper, as submitted:

Potential Significant Weapons Transfers – Israel's Response
(Reply to U.S. Non Paper submitted to JPMG No. 38, Tel-Aviv)

General

The longstanding obligation of the U.S. to preserve Israel's qualitative military edge is greatly appreciated. The status updates on the advanced weapon transfers to Arab countries is an important basis for our discussions on this subject. In the first part of this reply, we would like to reiterate several fundamental principles that form the basis of our position on how best to retain Israel's military qualitative edge. In the second part, we will make specific reference to the proposed transfers of designated weapon systems to the different Arab countries.

Basic Principles

In light of the basic strategic asymmetry that exists between

Israel and its neighboring Arab countries, the preservation of our qualitative edge is a fundamental pillar of Israel's national security strategy and deterrence capability. Israel is increasingly concerned with the narrowing of the qualitative gap by potential adversaries as a result not only of the transfer of cutting edge U.S. weapons and technology to the region, that also involves training and guidance, but also with the aggregative effect that the combination of these weapon systems and technologies have. These substantially improve the operational capabilities (air and naval in particular) of the Arab armed forces, and their potential to challenge IDF's major capabilities and systems, which in turn may in the long run influence also their intentions. In addition, we are worried that some of the capabilities may, under certain circumstances, fall into the hands of terror elements.

In relating to the term "qualitative military edge," Israel refers to its ability to sustain credible military advantage that provides deterrence and if need be, the ability to rapidly achieve superiority on the battlefield against any foreseeable combination of forces with minimal cost.

The Israeli assessment as to the threat posed to its QME by the transfers of advanced capabilities to Arab countries is analyzed according to two basic dimensions:

A. The type of weapon system. Initially, Israel focuses on the threats emanating from advanced capabilities that weapons systems provide rather than on the nature of the platforms (consequently submarines and UAV/UAS, for example, are not

considered merely as platforms but rather as sophisticated weapon systems).

B. The combination of these advanced capabilities with the countries involved.

With regards to the kind of capabilities that advanced weapon systems provide, we differentiate between 4 levels of threat:

A. Category 1 - Offensive self-guided systems with precise and effective standoff capabilities that threaten Israel's homeland. These include JDAM, JSOW, HARM, ATACAMS, HARPOON Block-2 (with sea to shore capability), and other systems of this nature. These capabilities - even in small numbers - introduce an element of instability into the strategic equation. In the case of confrontation, Israel would be forced to carry out pre-emptive offensive action against such capabilities in order to maintain its defensive capabilities.

B. Category 2 - Capabilities that can penetrate Israel's Air and Sea space and undermine Air and Sea superiority. These include Submarines, AMRAAM, advanced UAS such as the PREDATOR and other systems of this nature.

We consider the capabilities belonging to categories 1 and 2 to pose a paramount strategic threat to Israel's qualitative advantage. This, due to their offensive nature, advanced technology and the lack of suitable solutions to counter them.

C. Category 3 - Capabilities influencing fighting attrition ratios. These include AH-64D LONGBOW systems, TOW 2B, JAVELIN, and other systems of this nature.

Israel considers these qualitative weapon systems, platforms and munitions, especially in large numbers, to pose a threat to the Israeli military operational concept, increasing the cost of confrontation in terms of casualties, equipment, economy, deterrence image, etc.

D. Category 4 – Weapon systems that can be utilized by terror activists. These include shoulder-fired SAM's (such as STINGER), tactical UAV/UAS's, advanced ATGM's and other systems of this nature.

Regarding countries involved, Israel makes a distinction between states considered to be a present threat and others which present a risk. In this context, Israel would like to comment specifically on three cases:

A. Egypt: Israel attaches great importance to its Peace Treaty with the Arab Republic of Egypt and considers it a strategic asset. Israel believes that this policy is shared by Egypt as well. At the same time, Israel is concerned with Egypt's quantitative and qualitative military build-up and by the potential risk it poses to the Israel Defense Forces. The risk emanating from Egypt comes as a result of several disturbing trends:

a) Egypt's quantitative and qualitative military build-up aimed at addressing its perception of Israel as its overriding "threat of reference."

b) A shift in Egypt's military thinking to a western offensive doctrine combined with operational capabilities and war plans.

c) A "cold peace" policy and the message this policy conveys to the Egyptian people and armed forces that Israel is still a potential adversary.

The combination of these trends can prove explosive given a regime change and taking into account the worst case scenario. In addition, since the IDF's ORBAT is not being built against Egypt, Israel would need a long period of time in order to be able to address and counter effectively a change in the Egyptian intentions. Therefore, and taking into consideration U.S. interests, Egypt should not be provided with systems that may give it an advantage on the battlefield, while Israel is busy countering other threats.

B. Saudi Arabia: Has a long record of hostility against Israel, supporting terror, participating in most of the Arab-Israeli wars, avoiding contacts with Israel and opposing rapprochement between Israel and the Gulf Arab states. Following 9/11 terror attacks, information has been revealed exposing the depth and nature of Saudi involvement in supporting terror networks that threaten Western as well as Muslim governments.

At present, there is also a fear for the stability of the Saudi regime, posed by the same terror elements that the regime previously supported. The combination of highly advanced weapon systems in the hands of an unstable regime calls for a reassessment of the U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

In addition, since August 2004, the Saudis have been conducting unusual and sometimes aggressive air activity from

the Tabuq airfield (it should be recalled that the deployment to Tabuq constitutes a fundamental violation of promises given to Israel). Saudi interceptors have been repeatedly scrambled in response to routine Israeli air activity in the Eilat Gulf, including the stalking by 2 F-15 Saudi planes of the Israeli PM flight on its way to Sharm El-Sheikh summit (Feb. '05).

This pattern of Saudi air activity could be interpreted as indicating hostile intentions, and combined with geographic proximity and accumulative effect of advanced capabilities such as F-15 S, AMRAAM, JDAM, LANTIRN ER and LINK 16 – is a real threat and a cause of grave concern. The combined effect of these systems provides Saudi Arabia with long-range strategic attack capabilities, that they are unable to get from any other source.

C. Jordan: Israel treats Jordan as a special case. Israel views Jordan as a strategic partner, due to its unquestioned contribution to regional stability and the special relationship shared on the security level, which is characterized by transparency and openness, unlike the relationship with Egypt. Israel continues to be committed to the integrity, security and welfare of the Hashemite Kingdom, and has contributed directly and indirectly to this end.

However, due to the geographic proximity and potential strategic changes, Israel cannot afford a narrowing of the qualitative gap between the IDF and JAF (Jordanian Airforce). Israel similarly cannot risk the equipping of Jordan with SAM or other systems covering its entire airspace and potentially risking the Israeli Air Force and the Israeli civilian aviation.

Israel's Position on the U.S. Non Paper In light of the above mentioned principles, we wish to refer to the specific details of the U.S. Non Paper presented on the eve of the recent JPMG meeting in Tel-Aviv.

Egypt

1. HARM – Israel vehemently objects to the deal. We request not to authorize the transfer of the system under any circumstances (even if Egypt signs a CIS/MOA). This offensive anti-radiation standoff munition falls in the first and most severe threat category to Israel's QME, and is solely aimed against Israel's capabilities.

2. AMRAAM; Shoulder-fired Stingers – Israel strongly objects to these deals, even if they are currently on hold (pending Egyptian signature of a CIS/MOA).

3. TOW 2B, Apache Longbow – Israel is thankful to the U.S. for not releasing these systems ("not likely to be released" category).

4. PAC III – Israel requests that any future deal, if signed will guarantee that the systems will not be deployed in the Sinai Peninsula (such deployment will be considered a flagrant violation of the security annex of the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Accord).

5. Sale of 200 M10915 155 MM Self propelled Howitzers; 25 Avenger Fire Units; 50 T55-Ga-714a turbine engines for the CH-47D – Israel has no objection to these deals.

6. Osprey class mine hunter Coastal Ships – Israel has no objection to such a deal. We would like to know if the systems will include under-water detection and weapon systems.

Saudi Arabia

1. 165 Link 16 (MIDS)/Low volume terminals and 25 JTIDS terminals – This system will significantly upgrade the Saudi air-force attack and interception capabilities and will allow it to access real-time information on Israel. It will therefore increase the threat to Israel, posed anyway by the permanent F-15 deployment in Tabuq. Israel requests that the system will be "downgraded" and will not include the following capabilities: connection to American/Egyptian/Jordanian sensors, access to data on Israeli air space; and interface to air-to-air and air-to-ground attack systems, and ground control systems.

2. LANTIRN ER Targeting System Capability – The release of the advance configuration of the system will upgrade the air-to-ground capabilities of the Saudi air force allowing it long-range attack capabilities with a very low flight profile. Israel requests to "downgrade" the capabilities of the system by limiting its low altitude flight and Geo-coordinates production capabilities.

3. JDAM; JSOW – Israel strongly objects to the release of these systems to Saudi Arabia. The combination of AMRAAM systems, LANTIRN ER and JDAM/JSOW systems on F-15 will establish long range attack capabilities constituting a substantial threat to Israel. 4. 500 AIM120C AMRAAM – Israel

requests to slow down the pace of the delivery of the systems, because such a high quantity constitutes a "critical mass" that poses in itself a considerable threat.

5. Avionics upgrade kits and services to C-130/H aircraft – Israel has no objection to the deal.

The Gulf States

Israel would have preferred that the U.S. not pursue the sale of state of the art weapons to the Gulf States, which could transfer them to adversaries in case of a regional conflict. However, considering wider American interests in the region, Israel has chosen not to object to the particular deals listed in the Non Paper. That said, Israel is concerned that the release of certain advanced weapon systems to Gulf States, such as ATACAMS, JDAM, JSOW, HARM, Predator, will be a precedent for a future release to Egypt.

End text of Israel non-paper.

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